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ATTORNEY GENERAL CALLS METH LEGISLATION “HARD HITTING BUT NECESSARY”

BISMARCK – The 2005 legislature passed several hard-hitting but necessary bills to combat the use and manufacture of methamphetamine in North Dakota, says Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem.

The package of bills attacks the meth problem from a variety of angles, but the only noticeable change for most consumers will be the need to provide identification to purchase certain cough and cold medicines starting June 1. HB 1346 broadens the Retailer Meth Watch Program instituted in 2003, and requires medicines to be kept behind the counter or under video surveillance and retailers to obtain certain information in order to track sales.

“People already know they may be asked to show identification when they write a check, or buy alcohol or tobacco products,” said Stenehjem. “We must work together to fight meth. For almost everyone, this new requirement will be a minor inconvenience. But it will be a major roadblock for meth cooks,” he continued.

Other legislation provides additional tools for treatment providers, law enforcement officials, and the court system:

- HB 1287 permits law enforcement officers to arrest suspects for being under the influence of drugs even though they may not be in immediate possession of an illegal drug.
- HB 1290 requires individuals released on bail for drug-related charges to submit to random drug screening, revoking bail if the test shows continued use.
- HB 1409 allows a court to set restitution to compensate property owners for damage to property from meth labs.
- SB 2341 establishes a pilot treatment program in Walsh, Pembina, and Grand Forks counties to provide mandatory treatment for up to 18 months for first-time drug offenders.
- SB 2373 implements a pilot program to provide inpatient treatment for methamphetamine addiction.
- HB 1010 expands the Insurance Commissioner’s anhydrous ammonia tank lock program [currently in place in McKenzie and Williams counties] to Walsh, Cavalier, and Pembina counties, and provides funds to pay for locks.

“The legislature recognized the need to take the state’s fight against methamphetamine a step further. The comprehensive package of legislation combines tough enforcement with treatment and prevention options. I congratulate the legislature for its continued efforts, and believe these bills will have a positive and dramatic impact to reduce the manufacture of meth in North Dakota,” said Stenehjem.